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Thailand MOPH,-U.S. CDC and WHO Sponsor First International Rapid Response Training for Avian and Pandemic Influenza

The first international training for rapid response to outbreaks of respiratory pathogens, including avian influenza and pandemic influenza, will be held in Bangkok from 17-21 July. Over 100 participants from 14 countries will get hands-on training in what to do within the first 72 hours of reports of a respiratory outbreak, including avian influenza, in people. International authorities agree that early detection and response are the keys to containing or limiting the spread of respiratory outbreaks, including avian and pandemic influenza.

This course is a collaborative effort between the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention, the Ministry of Health, Thailand and the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) Public Health Sector. CDC is an agency of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services.

“This is just one example of the U.S. government’s commitment to improving capacity around the world to detect and respond to a potential influenza pandemic or other emerging respiratory pathogen,” said Dr. Sonja Olsen, acting chief of CDC’s Global Disease Detection Response Center/International Emerging Infections Program in Thailand.

The instructors for this course would include representatives from CDC, WHO and the Thailand Ministry of Public Health covering a broad range of technical expertise. Participating countries are Bangladesh, Burma, Cambodia, China, Egypt, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Laos, South Africa, Thailand, the United States and Vietnam.

“I am pleased that we have met our objective of developing a standard curriculum for building capacity for rapid response to avian and pandemic influenza, or any other emerging respiratory pathogen,” said Dr. Maureen Birmingham, head of the WHO Southeast Asian Regional Subunit for Alert and Response to Communicable Disease Outbreaks in Thailand.

“Our goal is to take what we’ve learned from our responses to avian influenza and assist senior epidemiologists in building teams that can recognize and respond to outbreaks that have the potential to become pandemics,” said Dr. Tawat Suntharajan, Director General of the Department of Disease Control at the Thailand Ministry of Public Health. “When these trainees return to their countries, they’ll be better equipped to train their colleagues in effective rapid response to any outbreak.”

The course will cover the following topics:

- The clinical presentation of influenza;
- epidemiological investigation of outbreaks of respiratory pathogens;
- outbreak containment;
- mechanisms for early notification of global health authorities;
- specimen handling, shipment and testing;
- antiviral treatment;
- vaccination;
- use of personal protective equipment;
- establishing quarantine; and
- working with the media.

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